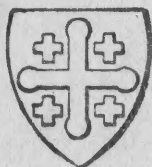


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## The League of Nations Union.

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# FORM THE LEAGUE OF PEACE NOW: AN APPEAL TO MY FELLOW-CITIZENS.

BY

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"ALL hands are needed to save the State *after the war*," wrote a friend to me the other day, and I thought he had expressed very neatly a highly practical truth, too easily overlooked. We are inclined to assume that all grave dangers to the State will be over once we have thoroughly overcome the enemy and secured the terms of a satisfactory peace; or that, if the dangers will not be all over, they must surely not distract our attention now, while we are fighting for all that makes life worth living. There is just one thing which at present we may say about the coming peace: it must not be a German peace, and it must not be inconclusive. On that the will of the Allies is definitely and finally set; and I hope and believe that no sacrifice the future may bring will shake their resolve.

### **Dangerous Assumptions as to Peace.**

But a dangerous assumption is apt to go along with this good and wise resolution. We are apt to think that once our cause has triumphed on the battlefield, a con-

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clusive and final peace will come as a matter of course : that its main conditions are plain, and that once fixed it will stand for ever. And lulling ourselves with these comforting thoughts we turn our minds and wills to the more pressing matter of the undecided war. This is an unwise attitude for the Allied people to take ; and if they persist in it, it may defeat their great purpose. In the first place, the terms of the peace we would impose are not likely to be perfect : I know nothing perfect in the life of States. Even after every care has been taken to secure a permanent peace, seeds of decay are apt to lurk within its conditions. One State will think that it has not got all its rights, another that it has been called upon to make too great a sacrifice ; and the sense of injustice will act as a corrosive. In the next place, the peace, however settled and however wise its terms, must be applied to external circumstances, and these are constantly changing and making new demands. Hence, like every other law laid down, though permanent in principle, it is modified to some degree by every case on which it is brought to bear. It is not enough to rest the peace on firm foundations ; these foundations, planted as they must be in the stream of changing events, must be kept in repair and continually strengthened. Even the Allied resolve on peace will have to be constantly renewed, like every other good quality, whether national or individual. Good purposes decay when out of exercise. Virtues not in operation die. The State, like personal character, must be forever building, if it is to be built at all.

### **Need of a League of Nations and a permanent Organ.**

A most important and pressing consequence follows. The States of the world, even if they were all at one in their resolve to maintain a perfect peace, must have the organ to carry out this resolve as circumstances change. A set of the wisest resolutions left in the air will be powerless. They must be carried out and applied. In order to have power over circumstances, the national will to peace must have a place amongst them visible and palpable. It must embody itself amongst other state institutions. It must forge an instrument which can

issue enactments, and have at its hand the power to carry them into effect in every emergency. Hence the necessity of forming the League of Nations, and, as I shall show, of forming it forthwith, because the risks of delay are great.

### **What we want to do to Germany.**

The dangers that will threaten peace after it is signed are not so obvious, and certainly they do not seem to be so urgent as those we are trying to turn aside by fighting. But they are not the less real from being more subtle and insidious, and from appearing to be distant and only to be dealt with by-and-bye when our "present task" is finished. They are the greater in fact. No one can be blind to the meaning of the barbaric ambition of Germany, and to its truculent spirit of domination. This menace to our well-being and to our very existence as a nation is written in letters of flame on all the battle-fields, and graven on sorrowing and anxious hearts in every home. The risks of an ill-considered and inconclusive peace are also seen by most of us—so far, that is, as these would arise from a doubtful victory; but no further. We do not seem to be awake to other facts that would make it insecure. We are, as a people, pretty well of one mind that we cannot afford to compromise *this* war; that were, probably, to be beaten in the still more terrible war which an "inconclusive" peace would most assuredly bring. That is why we say that Germany's weapon must be broken in its hands. Germany, we say, must lose its trust in military force and seek greatness in some other way. It must learn to despise military ambition. It must recognise the political crudeness of the spirit and will to dominate. It must come to see that a bully is not admirable because he happens to be on a national scale; and, certainly that he is not the nobler being for thinking that he is "above morality," bound neither by his own word, nor by any other rule of right living. And if I were to try to put down in one sentence why we and our Allies are fighting, I should say that we are fighting to change the mind of Germany on precisely these matters. The "will to peace" must reign in its soul instead of the will to war; and we are, in fact, engaged on trying to make it a practical, as well as a theoretical, pacifist!

### **A Strange Adventure.**

A strange enough adventure, our critics will say, and a sufficiently inconsistent method of entering upon the adventure. The attempt to stop war by fighting seems to them as absurd as to try to put out a fire by means of fire. I shall not stop to argue with them at present, further than to say two things which seem to be incontrovertible: *First*, that this is the only way to stop war which Germany has left open to the world, or, at the lowest, that this is the only way which seems open to millions of men who love peace no less than the most ardent pacifist, and love it more than their own lives; and *secondly*, that Nature, which is apt to be wiser than its critics, not infrequently employs the same method. When a criminal, be he national or individual, is deeply given to a way of wickedness, there is no other remedy than to allow him to follow it till he sees where it ends. The cup of bitterness is pressed to his lips till he has drunk it to the lees. There are cases in which men cannot see the folly of their ways and turn from them until they have exhausted the resources of their terrible delusion. And this seems to be the case with Germany.

### **The Purposes of the League of Peace are already Pursued.**

Now, if it be true that neither we ourselves nor our Allies want to destroy Germany, or to leave it impotent on the way to any form of good, but only to make it take its place amongst great nations as a lover and defender of the world's peace, we are already engaged on the purpose of the *League of Peace*. And, for my part, I believe that this is the fundamental truth of the present situation. We entered upon the war in order to secure the conditions of peace, and with no selfish or unjust ambition, and we shall stop fighting the moment that aim is reached. And, I trust, *not a moment sooner*. Our "War Aims" have been announced clearly from all the high places of statesmanship in the Allied world. They are freedom, independence, and the right of every nation, great or small, to live its own life and to develop its own best powers while respecting and respected by its neighbours. All the Allied nations have heard these purposes declared, and, so far as

I know, the many millions of their citizens have approved them. And the sincerity of their assent is made plain by the depth of their willing sacrifice. The conviction that they are not really fighting for such ends as these, but for something mean or selfish or small, would paralyse the arms of the Allies.

### **The War Aims of the Allies are the Conditions of a Lasting Peace.**

But these ends are, all alike, nothing less nor more than the conditions of a lasting peace. Peace can come and remain on no other terms. The seeds of war are in their opposites. No man or nation was ever meant to be the mere instrument of the will of another. For a nation to live at all is to live its own life and not another's. Till this right and this inherent necessity of its very being is recognised, there cannot be peace. The will to war, like a hidden fire, will lie at the heart of the oppressed, and on the first opportunity break into a conflagration.

### **The Supreme Law of Right Conduct between Nations.**

It is not enough, be it observed, that a nation should set a high price upon its own freedom, although this is a fundamental condition of its own well-being. It must place equal value on the freedom of every other nation, and even recognise that it is responsible for it. He was a very wise man who said that the supreme law of right conduct, and therefore of true well-being amongst men is "reverence for personality." "Treat human nature," he said, "in yourself and in all others always as an end and never as means." This is precisely what Germany has not done in the case of Belgium, or Serbia, and what it is not doing now to Roumania or Russia. Belgium was its mere means when it entered the war—its shortest cut to victory, as it foolishly believed, not reckoning upon awaking the resentment and resistance of the world. Belgium is still the means of Germany, its "*pawn*," now that it talks of the terms of peace. But the Allies desire to chase out of the world of international relations this crude and gross notion that either in peace or war nations can be pawns to

one another. All nations alike, whether they be civilised or savage, must be objects of respect and reverence to one another—sacred as they stand, and inviolable in virtue of their “personality.”

### **Only where this Law Rules will Peace be Secure.**

I know no more unerring mark of the good man and the true gentleman than this: you will find him always respect the personality of rich and poor, wise and foolish, high and humble alike. It is the way of gentleness and the way of peace, from which he will not be tempted to stray in word or deed. And the attempt to extend this rule to the conduct of nations is the greatest single step in international morality that the world has so far ever tried to take. The task of the future, and it is a long and slow task, is to engrain this purpose in their disposition. Then and only then will peace be secure. The nature of things, I believe, is in a plot against a permanent peace on any other terms: and the nations of the world will not find rest except in respecting and ratifying this supreme condition. To inculcate this truth so that it is universally held, and until it rules in detail the dealings of the nations with one another, is the primary and the permanent task of every league of peace. How great that task is, and how far we ourselves are from recognising that it is our own task and of paramount importance, is more than evident in our relations to one another, not to speak of our relations to other nations.

### **Must we not ignore these Truths for the Present?**

“But,” it will be said, “these truths, incontrovertible as they are, concern the future and not the present. Time enough to form leagues of peace, we hear, when we have won the war! If it be true that all hands will be needed to save the State *“after the war,”* it is still more true that all hands are needed *now* to win the war. Pray, let us be practical! We all desire peace, and a peace which will last. And what everyone desires is likely to come about in its own good time. Meanwhile, let us concentrate our power on defeating the enemy, and avoid all that will tend to distract our attention from this supreme necessity, and



especially all those things which may bring difference of opinion and discussion. The moment we win the war we will take up the next duty to hand—always a mark of the wise—and consider the conditions of our continued well-being, those of permanent peace conspicuously amongst the first of them."

### **The First Duty of the Allies if Germany is not thoroughly Defeated.**

Now all this looks most reasonable. There is, in truth, a sense in which winning the war must have priority over all other things. What will remain for the nation to do and what will be possible for it when the war is over, will depend on whether this war is, or is not, thoroughly and convincingly won. Unless that is done in an unambiguous way, the paramount duty of this country and of its Allies will be, not to seek peace, but to arm themselves for another struggle. And one has hardly the courage to ask what that terrible alternative would mean.

### **The Terms of Peace a Question for Experts.**

Not less reasonable seems the argument sometimes urged that even if the Allies are in a position to dictate the terms of peace, and are unanimous in desiring nothing except such terms as secure its permanency, the difficulty of deciding what these terms are is so great that it must be left in the hands of political and legal experts. As well ask the people to decide problems in Higher Mathematics, we may say, as the questions of international policy, especially when that policy is to be applied in a region as yet untried by human history. The terms of peace cannot be effective unless they consist of something more and better than benevolent generalities and maxims of the higher morality. They must set forth the needs and cater for the possibilities of the different peoples. They must arise from intimate knowledge of the state of affairs, not only in each organised political state, but also in each of the nationalities which we find jostle against one another in the same State. These matters, if not too high, are too intricate for the commonalty; we must leave them in the hands of men of wider outlook and fuller knowledge. Let us make it plain to our leaders that we desire a lasting

peace, and are ready to make almost any sacrifice to attain it, but leave the "how" in more competent hands than our own.

Nevertheless, often as we hear these arguments, and cogent as they seem to be, we would do well to subject them to close scrutiny before sitting down or falling asleep, while waiting for this great good to be brought to us.

### **The Waiting Attitude neither Usual nor Democratic—will Capital and Labour Wait till After the War?**

And the first thing that strikes us when we begin to reflect is the strange contrast between this attitude of passively waiting for the conditions of peace to be settled for us, and our attitude towards other conditions of our national well-being after the war. It is a most unusual, and, most people would say, a most reprehensible attitude for a democratic people to take. What other matters, even proximately as grave and universal in their national consequences, are we willing to postpone in the same way, or to leave in the hands of experts, political, juridical, or other? What do our commercial and industrial magnates say as to our future trade, and our economic place amongst the nations? Or what does Labour say as to the matters which concern the wage and well-being of the working classes? The answer is written quite plainly almost daily in every newspaper that we open. These things manifestly occupy the minds of many thousands of men, of men not the least wise by any means, nor the least resolute on winning the war: and they occupy their minds *now*. Nor can these matters be said to be non-contentious. On the contrary, I cannot name any others of such magnitude on which opinion is more apt to be divided, or convictions to be more inflammable. And they are not simple matters. Their solution, even in times of peace, has taxed our foresight, and our wisdom, and our will to the common good—may I not say, beyond our powers so far?

### **Will they Leave their Affairs to the Experts?**

Nevertheless, complex and intricate as these industrial and labour problems are, we are not willing to hand them over to "experts." On the contrary, we have our own



experience, and our own needs, and we will have our own say. We do not hesitate to *instruct* our politicians; they are exponents of the people's mind, and if they are wise, they are glad to learn of it, and in any case by no means unwilling to be instruments of its will. Nor will we postpone the problems of the future economic life till the war is over. We shall continue to think and speak of them in the midst of the struggle. And neither shall our struggle in the field of battle slacken, nor shall the roar of the machinery cease in our munition workshops; for we see clearly that these things are necessary to one another, and singly would have little meaning or value. We shall not count that we have won the war if at its close we are at the mercy of the enemy on the economic field; and we know that we cannot hold our own in the economic struggle unless we win the war. These are independent elements of one and the same concern, and they are equally urgent.

**We must go Hand in Hand with our  
Allies and yet we go on with  
Economic "Reconstruction."**

That we must go hand in hand with our Allies in our future economic arrangements, and must not move alone, is another complication; but it does not give us pause. On the contrary, we regard the fact as simply another call for wise forethought, and we invite them to join us in the attempt to arrive at wise conclusions. We recognise that there must be give and take; and we would see clearly in good time what sacrifices can be made by ourselves or should be required of others. We cannot let these matters sleep till the plenipotentiaries sit around the table to determine the terms of peace. We have moved already. We are engaged on what we call "Reconstruction." Reconstruction Committees, instituted by the Government, are sitting from day to day on the different aspects of our economic well-being after the war. Our legislators, so far from considering our industrial leaders meddlesome and mischievous, have sought to find out the men of the widest outlook; and from time to time they make the findings of these men known to the public at large, inviting criticism and suggestions from every quarter, so that, if it be possible the will of the nation may be united on sound lines.

Who will say that in all these things we have not done well, or that not to have done them would have been extremely foolish? And, except in the rarest and most despicable instances, economic and labour issues have not been allowed to obscure the paramount issue of defeating the enemy. The country's greater purpose is steady. We are moving towards victory on an even keel, in spite of our economic unrest.

### **Why has Reconstruction so narrow a meaning for us?**

But why has the meaning of "**Reconstruction**" been so confined that it suggests to so few anything beyond our economic well-being after the war? A looker-on at the economic struggle, who is in such circumstances and of such a temperamental make as to permit him to desire to *live as well as to make a livelihood*, is sometimes startled by the distortion of the purely economic mind: how the Capitalist can see nothing except through the medium in which he has soaked all his life-long, and how some workers, on their part, see nothing but evil in all his ways, nor significant good anywhere except in a wider power and a higher wage for their own class. But the nation at large is not willing, as yet, at least, to commit its future to the care of the economically-minded. It is recognised that, whoever bakes the bread, a nation cannot live on bread alone, any more than it can live without it. But it must be recognised at the same time that, comparatively speaking, we hear remarkably little about the other conditions of our future existence and well-being.

### **"The Watchers on the Walls."**

I am far from saying that there are no watchers on the walls except those who are concerned with our trades and industries. But they are relatively few in number; their deliberations have not deeply interested the public mind; their warnings have not caught the public ear. Their voices sound remote from the pages of the heavier *Quarterlies*, and, as usual, our politicians, apt to be deaf except to the cries of the many, have not heeded them. *Our Government has not instituted any Reconstruction Committee which shall consider the conditions of a per-*

manent peace, and how to secure them. It has not been required to do so in the one way which it regards as imperative: it has not been demanded of the Government by the nation. And the Government has not ventured in this matter to anticipate the public mind, nor taken effective steps either to fashion its thoughts or to form its will. The idea that a "League of Nations" is the only means by which the world-peace can be secured is widely entertained: at least, I have heard of no other way, except that which has recommended itself to Germany, namely, to subjugate the world to its will; and that way, we are resolved, shall remain untravelled either by our own or by any other State. The Allied nations owe deep gratitude to President Wilson for placing this idea so prominently before the world; and (for enforcing it) to Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Balfour, Mr. Asquith, Lord Bryce, General Smuts, and, to mention only one other, to him who by his superb struggle for peace four years ago has endeared himself to the nation's heart perhaps more than any other man—our "Edward Grey."

### **The Remoteness of the Idea. Is it a Dream?**

But how vague that idea still is, so far as the public mind is concerned, and how insecure! As I write to-day one prominent statesman who favours the conception finds himself constrained to ask whether it is not "a visionary ideal, impossible of attainment in a hard, practical world." He suggests that, as President Wilson is its sponsor, it cannot be "either an unpatriotic or a ridiculous proposal." One is reminded of Browning's Caponsacchi and his fair vision of a life with Pompilia at his side, when he would

"Have to do with nothing but the true,  
The good, the eternal." . . .  
"All this," he exclaims; "how far away!  
Mere delectation, meet for a moment's dream."

And then he awakes from his dream—

"To the old solitary nothingness."

**The World has Dreamt of a Lasting Peace before; but wishing for Peace is one thing, willing it is another.**

I am constrained to ask what security is there that the world will not in like manner, when victory is won, collapse

back into the old troubled commonplace. It has dreamt of a universal peace before, and endeavoured to establish it. But the foundations were insecure: a very few years sufficed to grind them into dust. The potentates wished it, so long as they were war-weary, and the common people wished it then as they always do. But the mere fact that the democracies are the potentates now will not secure it, even though they wish it. For it is a long step in this and many other social and political matters *from the wish to the resolute will*. And this is the step the world must take, in order to form a League of Peace, without which, we are told, "Victory will not be worth having." Wishes in plenty there are on every hand, and laudable ones; but they are otiose things; we call them "empty." They are very easy and very cheap. They cost no sacrifice, invent no means, concentrate upon no purpose, and merely entertain our hours of idleness. Mere wishes are poltroons. They see the difficulties, and they let them be.

### **We must either think out the Conditions of Peace or Face Another War.**

Is it not true on the whole that, thus far, such has been the attitude of the British nation towards this subject? We acknowledge that the establishment of a League of Peace is "of the most transcendental importance." We see plainly that the difficulties it entails and the risks it must inevitably bring are not greater than the difficulties and dangers of a future war; and we know that these are the only alternatives. If we do not make sure of the former, we must face the latter. What practical steps, then, are we taking to decide this tremendous issue of a world at peace, or the unimaginable ruin of the future war? Let us look round for a moment and try to see whether, so far from postponing this issue till the war is over, we should not be up and doing *now*.

### **The Church Prays for Peace and then Sits Still.**

There is one institution in the world which, with all its defects, stands first both in its responsibility and in its care for the world's lasting good. I mean the Christian Church in all its branches. It was on its knees on the Sabbath day which closed the fourth year of the war,

praying for a universal and lasting peace before Him upon Whom it has placed its trust. This was well. But one of the greatest of the world's leaders in the battle for freedom bade his religiously impassioned Army "Trust in the Lord *and* keep its powder dry." He knew that human good must come through human means. God's law—the law of righteousness, peace, and goodwill—must become man's will, and thereby "a law of liberty" in which man finds "delight" and inspiration, and a wondrous power over circumstance. Then all will be well: for the will *must* pass into action. It is never a mere "idea" like a wish, but an idea in process of inventing instruments for itself, and stamping a new character upon facts. To will is to gather up one's strength; and every volition is in its degree a symptom of concentrated faculties, and of earnestness and sincerity of soul. Prayer that ends in wishing and does not pass from adoration of the Highest into striving for the best is little, if it is at all, better than an empty form. True prayer, on the other hand, "discloses a moral necessity," to use the great phrase of Mr. Wilson, and makes man its passionate instrument.

### **A League of Peace is a Moral Necessity.**

The moral necessity that the free nations of the world should unite in a League of Peace is very urgent. The same wise statesman placed a high value upon the very thought of it as an end to be made sure. "If this war has accomplished nothing else . . . it has set forward the thinking of the statesmen of the world by a whole age. Repeated utterances of the leading statesmen of the great nations now engaged in war have made it plain that their thought has come to this, that the principle of public right must henceforth take precedence over the individual interests of particular nations, and that the nations of the world must in some way band themselves together to see that that right prevails as against any sort of selfish aggression; that henceforth alliance must not be set up against alliance, understanding against understanding, but that there must be a common agreement for a common object, and that at the heart of that common object must lie the inviolable rights of peoples and of mankind."

" Only when the great nations of the world have reached some sort of agreement as to what they hold to be fundamental to their common interest, and as to some feasible method of acting in concert when any nation or group of nations seeks to disturb these fundamental things, can we feel that civilisation is at last in a way of justifying its existence and claiming to be finally established."—*(Enforced Peace: Proceedings of the First Annual National Assemblage of the League to Enforce Peace, p. 161. Washington, May 26th-27th, 1916.)*

### **The Nations must reach a higher Moral Level.**

But to attain this end it is necessary, not only that the leading statesmen, but that the great nations of the world whom they serve and lead, should reach the same new level of thinking and acting. They must care more for one another's good and realise more fully than they have hitherto done that they are responsible for one another—"Keepers of their brethren." The nations of the world cannot walk in selfish isolation on the way to life, but must bear one another's burden, and, as members of one family, be most gentle to the most weak and footsore. Verily, the task of fostering this oneness of mind is no alien matter, but is the inner essence of the mission of the Christian Church. Entering upon this task in a practical and resolute way, it would find itself leading on a great moral adventure, the widest and most generous our political watchmen on the walls have ever seen rising above man's moving horizon.

### **A Noble Theme for our Religious Leaders.**

For my part, I am not able to conceive a nobler theme upon which our religious teachers might lead the peoples' thought to dwell, as the burden of sorrows of the war grow heavier month by month. The vision of a lasting peace, and still more the growing conviction which would ensue that, provided the peoples make up their will, the vision is not an impracticable dream, would strengthen the heart of the nations to hold on. Moreover, when our plenipotentiaries of peace are sitting round the table they would know that at their backs there are nations willing



to make sacrifices, and resolved that all the political and legal difficulties which they must face are *difficulties to be overcome*.

### **Clean Politics for our Churches.**

One always hesitates to ask the Church to meddle in politics. But in this case at least, it would not tarnish its hands. Nor would *this* cause divide them. The issue is so plainly and so purely moral, and the service of it would be so indubitably a "divine" service. **The Churches would come out clean though every one of them placed, not at their doors but even at their altars, a petition which their congregations could sign, that our statesmen should form a League of Peace, and form it in time.**

What I would fain ask of the Churches I would ask not less earnestly of the other great public instructor—the public Press. The difficulties of forming the League between the nations will be solved only by "the forces *within* the nations." These alone can compel the establishment of peace, and constrain respect for the findings which are reached from time to time. For the task of *establishing* the peace is not done once for all at the series of sittings: it is a progressive task, demanding a permanent instrument to achieve it, and an unbroken and ever-renewed international resolve to hold up the hands of those to whom is committed the incalculably great difficulties of making that resolve effectual.

### **An Appeal to another great instructor of the Public—the Press.**

The columns of the Press, already and always, in virtue of the very variety of the opinions and the open field for free discussion which they offer to the public upon all kinds of political subjects, the most powerful agent in forming and guiding the nations' will, might, like the Church, find a most worthy and most fruitful theme in the problems of the League of Nations. Week by week—nay, day by day—this great ideal, and the different ways in which men think it might be attained, could be discussed. It will not be easy, we all say, for the nations to find the true path to this great good: and there are many perilous bye-ways. But the Press usually finds

inspiration in difficulties ; and wisdom issues from colliding views.

That the question "bristles with difficulties for statesmen and international lawyers" is quite true ; but, so far, the public Press has not been conspicuously ready to trust "experts." If, in this case, it puts on the new garb of reticent modesty, it will not be from a habitual reluctance "to step in where angels fear to tread," but for some less charming reason.

**The Duty to Enforce Peace by the  
Ways of Peace, and to Co-operate  
with our Army and Navy--*NOW*.**

But why should I linger longer? Will not the Press take this matter up with new energy, and resolve that it will not stand under the responsibility of leaving the public mind uninterested and uninformed, or its will too slack to enforce peace by the ways of peace, even as our suffering and slaughtered youths are striving to enforce it on the fields of blood ; it is *delay* that brings danger : it is *delay* that the wise fear. We must form the League of Nations *now*.

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